

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES</b> <b>CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 4:</b> Assessment <b>Section 19:</b> Safety Planning	
	<b>Effective Date:</b> May 1, 2023	<b>Version:</b> 9

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## POLICY OVERVIEW

Safety planning promotes the ongoing safety and well-being of a child when risk to the child's safety has been identified. Collaboration with the child and family in the safety planning process helps to build their protective capabilities.

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## PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will assist a child's family with the development of safety planning when a child's safety is at risk. Efforts to ensure the child's safety in all settings must be considered (e.g., school, extracurricular activities, home). The Safety Plan should contain clearly defined action steps that relate directly to the child's immediate safety and describe in detail how, when, and by who each intervention will be implemented.

The Safety Plan cannot restrict parenting time in any way or contradict existing court orders (i.e., child support and child custody orders). If a concern arises regarding the child's safety during parenting time, DCS will staff with the FCM Supervisor and the DCS Staff Attorney to identify possible steps to remedy the concerns.

Child safety will be reassessed regularly and the Safety Plan and/or Plan of Safe Care (if applicable) will be developed, reviewed, and modified, as needed, throughout the assessment phase.

**Note:** A separate Safety Plan must be completed when the Plan of Safe Care does not address all safety concerns for each child included in the case. See policies 4.22 Making an Assessment Finding and 4.42 Plan of Safe Care for further guidance.

Following the completion of the Initial Safety Assessment (see policy 4.18 Initial Safety Assessment), a Safety Plan will be created as quickly as necessary to maintain the safety of the child. Situations which require the completion of a Safety Plan include, but are not limited to:

1. A safety decision of "Conditionally Safe" has been determined through the Initial Safety Assessment;

**Note:** Safety Plans are not required for unsubstantiated assessments where the safety decision of Initially Safe/Clearly Safe has been determined through the Initial Safety

Assessment. Safety Plans are optional in such instances and should only be completed if there is a value in creating a Safety Plan.

2. An assessment finding of “Substantiated” is reached, but DCS will pursue no further direct intervention; or

**Note:** An assessment may not be closed without further DCS intervention unless all safety threats have been resolved.

3. Initiation of an assessment when domestic violence (DV) has been alleged. See policy 2.30 Domestic Violence for additional guidance.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Collaborate with the family and Child and Family Team (CFT) to develop a Safety Plan;

**Note:** Partner with the non-offending parent and child to create a Safety Plan in all Child and Family Team assessments where DV has been alleged (see policies 2.30 Domestic Violence and 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings).

2. Engage the child in safety planning, as age and developmentally appropriate. See Practice Guidance for information about creating a plan for safety with the child.

**Note:** The child is not responsible for the child’s own safety and should not be responsible for implementing the Safety Plan.

3. Discuss in detail with the family the implementation of any of the interventions below that are included in the safety response:
  - a. The family uses informal supports to ensure the child’s safety, or

**Note:** Extended family members are often the most resourceful and most effective supports for the family and their interventions are often the least disruptive for the child involved (see policy 16.03 Assistance for Family of Origin’s Basic Needs).

- b. A referral for services through a contracted DCS service provider for the family. See policy 4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services for further guidance.

**Note:** DCS service providers will not be included on a Safety Plan created at assessment closure when DCS involvement will not continue unless a plan is in place for the service to continue without DCS involvement.

4. Document any changes in the family’s living arrangements in the case management system, if applicable;
5. Specify how the FCM will monitor and support the family’s compliance with the Safety Plan until the completion of the assessment, and discuss what may occur if an intervention is not followed;
6. Have the parent, guardian, or custodian, and all responsible parties listed in the plan sign the Safety Plan and provide a copy to the parent, guardian, or custodian and all responsible parties listed in the plan;

**Note:** If there is court involvement in an active Child in Need of Services case, the Safety Plan should also be provided to the court.

7. Review the Safety Plan with the FCM Supervisor and obtain approval of the Safety Plan prior to assessment closure. See policy 4.41 Safety Staffing for further guidance;

**Note:** When updates to the Safety Plan are identified during review with the FCM Supervisor, the FCM must engage the family and CFT to create an updated plan and obtain supervisory approval of the new plan.

8. Upload each Safety Plan to the case management system;
9. Re-assess the child's safety regularly throughout the assessment and prior to closure of the assessment, and adjust the Safety Plan, as necessary. See policy 4.25 Completing the Assessment for additional information; and
10. Ensure the Safety Plan is discussed with the permanency FCM during transition planning if further DCS involvement is necessary (see policy 5.01 Transitioning a Case).

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review information gathered during the assessment, the Initial Safety Assessment, and the Safety Plan during regular case staffing and prior to assessment closure. See policy 4.41 Safety Staffing for additional information;
2. Ensure each identified safety concern is addressed in the Safety Plan;
3. Guide the FCM in engaging the family and CFT to create or update the Safety Plan, as needed;
4. Sign the approved Safety Plan following each review;
5. Ensure each Safety Plan is uploaded to the case management system and provided to all listed responsible parties; and
6. Ensure the Safety Plan and assessment details are discussed with the permanency FCM during transition planning if further DCS involvement is necessary.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

#### Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systemic and frequent review of all case information with safety, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

#### Protective Factors

Protective Factors are characteristics in families that, when present, increase the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children and families. Protective factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and may be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems.

#### Safety Plan

A Safety Plan is a voluntary, non-legally binding written agreement with the family, which identifies interventions to address the safety of the child and specifies family supports and/or community services that will be utilized.

## Forms and Tools

- Initial Safety Assessment - Available in the case management system
- [Plan of Safe Care \(SF 56565\)](#)
- [Protective Factors Resources](#)
- [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)

## Related Policies

- [2.30 Domestic Violence](#)
- [4.18 Initial Safety Assessment](#)
- [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#)
- [4.25 Completing the Assessment Report](#)
- [4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services](#)
- [4.37 Change in Household Composition](#)
- [4.41 Safety Staffing](#)
- [4.42 Plan of Safe Care](#)
- [5.01 Transitioning a Case](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [5.09 Informal Adjustment \(IA\)/Prevention Plan](#)
- [6.02 Filing a CHINS Petition](#)
- [16.03 Assistance for Family of Origin's Basic Needs](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or family violence"](#)
- [IC 35-37-6-1: "Confidential communication"](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.19

*Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.*

### **Consideration of Protective Factors To Ensure Safety**

Protective factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and may be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems. When completing a Safety Plan, consider the protective factors listed in the Protective Factors Resources (linked above) as part of an evaluation of the family's ability to ensure the safety of the child.

### **Including Children in the Safety Planning Process**

During the initial interview, if the child is unable to identify who to call or where to go in an emergency, work with the child to develop a basic plan for safety. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Finding a safe adult and asking for help whenever the child experiences violence. This may involve calling supportive family members, friends, or community agencies for help;
2. Escaping from the house if an assault is imminent or in progress and where to meet an identified safe adult. If the child is not able to escape, discuss where the child may go in the house to be safe;
3. Not intervening, in any circumstance, in moments of violence between parents/caregivers;
4. Finding a place to go in an emergency and the steps to take to find safety; and
5. Calling the police or 911 when violence begins.

### **Parental Involvement in Safety Planning Development**

Involvement of the family in the development of a Safety Plan is imperative. The greater the family's participation in this process, the more ownership they will have in a successful outcome. For this reason, it is critical that the FCM focus the discussion on the safety of the child and not on the allegation. When developing the Safety Plan with the family, the FCM should speak in such a way as to develop a common understanding that the safety of the child is contingent on the family's ability and willingness to follow the terms of the plan. If the family is hesitant or unwilling to create a plan and/or commit to abiding by the plan's terms, remind the family that the child may not be safe under present circumstances.

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